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EDITORIAL NOTES

It is apparent that an increasing reaction is setting in amongst some ufologists to the so-called 'New Ufology' which developed throughout the '70s. Many people felt dissatisfied with the idea that grew in this period which analysed the UFO (and other anomalous and paranormal) phenomena in terms of internal human psychological and sociological processes - an analysis that found a sympathetic outlet in this journal.

The reaction has been expressed in two ways. Firstly, and most constructively, by the development of alternative ideas, based on a physical element to the phenomena, offering hope of testable theories. The 'earth lights' theory is perhaps the most constructive manifestation of this line of thought.

Another, but less useful, reaction has been the resurgence of the ETH. In some ways this may be helpful in keeping open an avenue of thought. But generally the results of the ETH revival have not been benign and - particularly in America - we are seeing ufology retreating into a hobbyist ghetto of Buck Rogers spaceships and crashed saucers. We now hear from Yorkshire that ETH proponents defend their crumbling arguments by threats, and physical violence to those who challenge their doubtful evidence.

There is an artistic movement, most advanced in architecture, which has begun to challenge some of the tenets of modernism. Architects are rediscovering the meanings of traditional forms jettisoned during the dominance of the Modernism. This movement is called post-modernism. *Magonia* has often expressed the view that ufology is much an art as a science; perhaps we are now seeing the birth of Post-Modernist Ufology.

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THE CURIOUS CONNECTION BETWEEN HELICOPTERS AND UFOS

Dennis Stilling



During the past three or four years, as I was reviewing the more recent literature on UFOs and the cattle mutilation phenomenon, I became aware that so-called 'phantom helicopters' were often seen in connection with these phenomena. In addition these usually unmarked, usually black, helicopters demonstrated some rather remarkable properties: they move silently or with sound unlike those of normal helicopters: they fly at abnormal unsafe or illegal altitudes: they appear both shy and aggressive.

They are reported to carry 'oriental-looking' people; their passage sometimes 'blisters' the dead and mutilated animals; they 'direct' abnormally brilliant beams of light; they hover over missile sites and military bases; often they are heard distinctly and very loudly but not seen; sometimes they look like helicopters but sound like airplanes; they sometimes flash multi-coloured lights; they are observed in association with nocturnal lights; they are sometimes seen flying at abnormally high rates of speed.

All of this sounds very much like the sorts of behaviour typically reported of flying saucers. Strangest of all is that UFOs are occasionally reported to change into helicopters, or the helicopters are seen shortly before or after sightings of UFOs.

It was this combination of reported abnormal characteristics, and especially the reports of apparent trans-mogrifications, that prompted me to ask myself the following question: if such phenomena

were reported as occurring in a dream, how would such a dream be interpreted? Such a dream would indicate that in some sense, an equivalence or, at least, a very close relationship between helicopters and UFOs was being suggested. In reality, of course, helicopters are not identical with UFOs, and so the relationship must be of a different sort.

It was my hypothesis that, if there was a deep-rooted psychological connection between helicopters and UFOs, evidence of this connection would appear in the experience and activities of individuals preoccupied - not with UFOs necessarily - but with helicopters. Since the work of these individuals predates the so-called modern era of UFO sightings, reliable naive material could be expected.

It so happens that one of the engineers most involved in early helicopter design was Arthur Young and, as luck would have it, Arthur Young published in a book called *The Bell Notes*, the record of his thoughts and activities during the time of his most intense efforts to design the Bell Model 47 helicopter.

In Peter Dreyer's forward to the book, and in the very first paragraph he states that Arthur Young "had come to see the helicopter chiefly as a metaphor for the evolving spirit - the winged self which he now began to call the 'psychopter'." In Young's own words "the many headed dragon of the helicopter seemed to be growing more heads all the time", and "I am working on the psychopter within the helicopter. I experimented with the self instead of with the machine." Using an image borrowed from alchemy he writes: "Bell has become a laboratory in which I try to distil myself. The helicopter is only the vessel... I am constantly directing myself towards attainment of the psychopter". Arthur Young went on to become intensely involved in psychic phenomena and metaphysics.

I also checked on Igor Sikorski. In 1900, at the age of 11, Sikorski had a dream that affected him deeply. The details of the dream are very much like a Jules Verne conception of being aboard a UFO:

"I saw myself walking along a narrow, luxuriously decorated passageway. On both sides were walnut doors, similar to the staterooms of a steamer. A spherical electric light from

the ceiling produced a pleasant bluish illumination. Walking slowly, I felt a slight vibration under my feet and was not surprised to find that the feeling was different from that experienced on a steamer or on a railway train. I took this for granted, because in my dream I knew that I was on board a large flying ship in the air."

Sikorski wrote several books of a theological and metaphysical nature. In 1947 he published *The Invisible Encounter*, a rather despairing book on the morals and fate of the twentieth century.

Another, very suggestive, dream illustration of the connection between UFOs and helicopters may be found in a letter to C.G. Jung in 1959. The writer was not, as far as I know, deeply involved with helicopters, but this is not certain. The dream is as follows:

"An aeroplane appeared from clouds of smoke or fog [The appearance of smoke or fog is often reported to be seen prior to encounters with UFOs and UFO abductions]. Then a contraption like a helicopter descended towards the dreamer to fetch him [There is an apparent transformation of the aeroplane into a helicopter, a type of phenomenon also reported in the UFO literature]. He saw shadowy figures which he knew to be higher types of man, with greater knowledge and absolutely just, visitors from another world". The years 1946 and 1947 were notable for other events of relevance to this discussion. On March 8, 1946, Arthur Young's machine, the Bell Model 47 helicopter, was awarded the world's first commercial helicopter licence. The helicopter thus became part of the general culture.

Considerable speculation was given to the possibility that "everyone" might own their own device for "genuine three-dimensional travel". In the very next year, 1947, atmospheric straight-line flight achieved another sort of freedom: the sound barrier (sometimes referred to as a demon in the sky) was broken by a Bell X-15 rocket plane. In addition the world groundspeed record was established in 1947. Following Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech of the previous year, 1947 was termed the 'Year of division'. And, 1946 - 1947 marks the beginning of the modern era of flying saucers.

The theme of splitting was not only a feature of post-war science and politics, but

manifested in the technology of the time as well. It seems as though the flight characteristics of the UFO - enormous straight line velocities combined with the ability to hover and move at right-angles and in all directions - were reproduced by us in the best way we could: by means of our rockets and helicopters. Unable to combine the astounding performance characteristics of the UFO in a single device, we produced two quite different technologies, each of which mimicked only one set of UFO flight characteristics.

One is tempted here to view the UFO as the visible representation of a background dynamis that is stimulating us to produce technologies that are partial representations of something that is, in its essence, irrepresentable and paradoxical.

What is the psychopter?
The psychopter is the winged self. It is that which the helicopter usurped - and what the helicopter was finally revealed not to be.

One is reminded of the behaviour of the hero in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, who feels compelled to reproduce in material form a vague and elusive unconscious image. One may further speculate that the level of accomplishment achieved by the production of supersonic rocket planes and reliable helicopters in some sense caused this background dynamis to reveal itself in the form of the irrational and myth-provoking UFO. It was as if this hidden element were saying "No, that is not exactly it, that is not the whole picture. A merely technological representation is not ultimately satisfactory, so here is something for you *really* to think about!". The UFO thus emerges as a sort of *tertium quid*, a transformative element of the mind related to human creativity. Arthur Young addresses himself to this point several times in his book. He writes:

"What is the psychopter? The psychopter is the winged self. It is that which the helicopter usurped - and what the helicopter was finally revealed not to be. Fundamentally, I am trying to get out of the helicopter not because of what it is, but because I believe in the psychopter. The construction of the psychopter is not advanced by plunging again into the helicopter. It is advanced by

trying to distill the helicopter. So that from the point of view of the psychopter, which is the important one, the only commitments toward the helicopter which should presently be stressed are indirect ones.

Young refers to *The Bell Notes* as:

"[A] notebook on [a] machine that is much more complicated and subtle than the helicopter. The machine is my mind and body, with which I experiment every day, through which I will eventually achieve the end I seek, for I always knew it was not the helicopter. Here is a great experiment indeed."

From these quotations we rather gather that this individual, Arthur Young, who was deeply involved in the problems of designing the helicopter, felt the

machine to be an inadequate external representation of an inner driving force to which he was totally committed. He saw the psychopter/helicopter problem as related to the nature of his own mind and body. It is of interest here that Jule Eisenbud has referred to the UFO phenomenon as an "into-the-body-experience".

The biophysicist Otto Schmitt asks us to consider such experiences as apparitions, and, by extension, the phenomena of UFOs, to be considered as examples of what he terms "matrix-inversion" - i.e., that instead of arising from the action of an external object on the sensorium, the 'perception' event may be primary, with the external object arising as a secondary phenomenon - a point of view not inconsistent with traditional teachings of Eastern philosophy.

We already know that certain forms of mental disorder are accompanied by the loss of the sense of bodily boundaries. Often this condition is accompanied by a view of the body as an extended machine or as being invaded by a machine. This condition has been well conceived by the UFO-naïve artist who produced this lithograph [over]. This UFO-like image has clear resemblances to a machine, yet it is obviously of a very organic nature. It is composed of sinews and skeletal tissues that

strongly suggest the parts of one or more human bodies. This 'flask' or *vas hermeticum* of tissue is surmounted by a pair of wings in the position of the rotors of a helicopter. the whole of the object seems to be emerging out of the metaphysical background of existence. The work was done in 1973, and is entitled *Air Machine*.

A very interesting mythology has been built up around the helicopter in popular culture. Recently a surrealist novel has been published called *God's Helicopter* in which a demonic god terrorises the main character by means of a helicopter and its disembodied noise. Ron Westrum reports an 'abduction case' in which the sound of a helicopter figures as a fear-provoking element.

The helicopter has taken on near-mythological proportions in television and movies. *Blue Thunder* and the spin-off TV series *Airwolf* come immediately to mind. In these shows the helicopters possess such

advanced technology that they take on a kind of personality. In the movie *Apocalypse Now!* helicopters are portrayed as Valkyries who attack the Viet Cong to the music of Wagner. In this film a cow is hoisted by helicopter to supply a barbecue held by the fliers of the machines, clearly mimicking reports of cattle abductions and mutilations. I doubt if this was the conscious intent of the film makers.

Perhaps the most outstanding of the many examples of modern helicopter mythology comes from the movie *Iceman*. In this, a resuscitated Neanderthal shaman sees the helicopter as a divine being. The consulting anthropologist in the movie attempts to explain the relationship of a helicopter to the Neanderthal as follows:

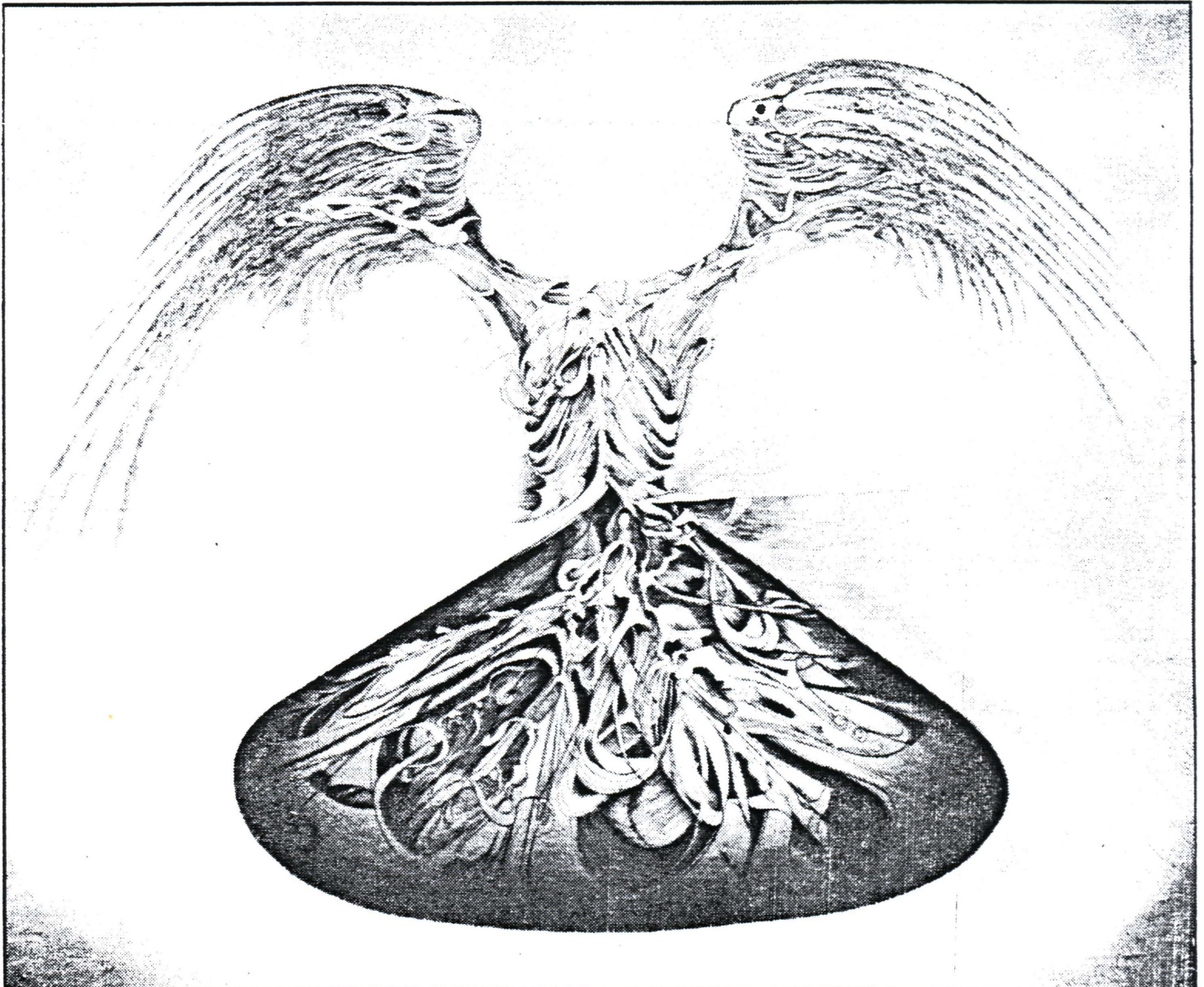
"The helicopter is the bird, the messenger of the gods, but also a Trickster - supposed to take you to heaven, but if you've done wrong, it takes you somewhere else, where you're judged

for your sins."

Here the helicopter is given the alternate roles of devil or angel as expressed in the Trickster figure, prominent in the folklore of North American Indians for his considerable ability to change into many forms. In this way he is analogous to the alchemical figure of Mercurius, who may be said to stand for the collective unconscious itself. Trickster/Mercurius is the source of both creative activity and gross deception.

I am not claiming a complete solution to the problem of UFOs or cattle mutilations. The UFO problem is far too rich to be encompassed by one solution. I am suggesting that there are fruitful areas of investigation, not usually explored, that may give us a different perspective on what we are trying to see. The peculiar relationship between UFOs and helicopters may well provide such a different perspective.

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PAUL DEVEREUX
outlines recent developments in
earth lights research, and
comments on points raised in
the last Magonia

EARTHLIGHTS

There are a number of points in *Magonia* 24 I'd like to pass brief comments on. Michael Goss's article was a delight. I would just point out that those *shito-dama* phenomena described as "roundish tadpole shaped" does bring dramatically to mind Kenneth Arnold's description of his Cascade Mountains 'flying saucers' as taking on a 'tadpole shape' when crossing Goat Ridge; of the 'reptions' of the "lines of tadpole shaped lights" witnessed by hundreds of people before the 1957 Charnwood (Leicestershire) earthquake; and the fact that laboratory discharges similar to those produced by Brady *et al* develop a tadpole-like tail when subjected to radio fields, which extends their life. Likewise, David Clarke's contribution was most welcome.

Claude Mauge's critical article on Persinger's Tectonic Strain Theory (TST) was sensibly written, but does raise a few points. Firstly, it is interesting that such an article appears in *Magonia* ten years after the publication of Persinger's book on the subject: one can only assume that my book *Earth Lights* has at last brought a curiously lethargic and indeed reticent ufological awareness of the research area. There is however a fundamental flaw in Mauge's critical methodology.

While some of the weaknesses suggested by Mauge are valid, the approach of dealing just with Persinger's IST on its own is fallacious. The only way for anyone now to appraise the earth lights theory is to take account of ALL the work going on in the area. The work of myself and my colleagues in many ways complements Persinger's work, and vice-versa. So, while it is valid to complain that Persinger's databases and huge geographical areas covered can, at best, show only general tendencies, we in Britain have shown the theory to be even more strongly supported in detailed, regional studies. The Barmouth-Harlech ("Egryn") events of 1904/5, for example, have been meticulously associated with faulting in the most unambiguous way. the reported lights phenomena cannot be dismissed as strictly psychosociological (though their interpretation may have been) as many sightings were multiple witness events, and outside observers also saw the phenomena. Moreover, there was not a media industry devoted to 'UFOs' at the time to influence anyone's thinking. The sheer correlation of lights with faults in any case shows too distinct a pattern for dismissal. Further, we have now obtained the data to show that the Barmouth events occurred in the middle of a period of exceptional seismic events in Wales stretching from the mid-1890s to 1906. We now know, for

example, that the Barmouth events of late 1904 to early 1905 were presaged by a quake epicentred on Beagellert on 21st October 1904. The Welsh faults were under virtually constant stress during the ten years to 1906. Other outbreaks of lights were recorded in the Llangollen area and the Pontypridd - Newport areas also. This sort of data, and similar material McCartney and I have researched for other regions means that it is impossible to dismiss the tectonic correlations with these lights if intellectual viability is to be maintained. (This observation can be made without anyone being able to detail the mechanisms that may actually be involved.)

Persinger and Derr have now conducted detailed studies of the Toppenish Ridge region of Washington State, and have used an exceptional database (using the observation and photography of light phenomena by fire lookouts, - using radio communication and triangulation in some cases - police officers and scientists) linked to detailed information of geological features and temporal seismic events of a low order of magnitude. Persinger and Derr make a distinction between the fundamental mechanisms producing earthquake lights and UFO light phenomena, though both sets of associated mechanisms are nevertheless linked. They also refer to the possible involvement

of ultrasonic waves in light phenomena production: ultrasound has been picked up anomalously by Dragon Project researchers at stone circle sites in Britain, which share a similar correlation with faulting as does light phenomena incidence. There is so much practical work that ufologists could be concerning themselves with. It is a pity that armchair criticism bogs down research within ufology.

Maugé refers to Rutowski, but in responses to American publications I have shown him to be grinding a particular axe, and that his criticism is poorly founded. Rutowski complains that 90% of Persinger's database is 'noise', a figure Mauge feels is likely to be larger. I would be most interested to learn what the factual basis is for such figures. While I have always supported the idea that there is a powerful psychosociological component in UFO data, I nevertheless suspect that it is over-emphasised. There are elements of sociological thinking within ufology that cannot be convinced that there is any unexplained external phenomenon involved, and this bias should not be mistaken for objectivity.

I am not saying that Persinger's work is beyond criticism. Indeed, in 1983 McCartney, Robins and I pointed out the inadequacy of piezo-electricity as a primary earth lights 'motor', in contradiction of Persinger's earlier ideas. This was confirmed by work at Sussex university which shows that non-piezo rocks can still produce light phenomenon when stressed in laboratory conditions. This has subsequently been endorsed by Brady's work in Denver. But earth lights exist, and Persinger - and anyone else - should only be congratulated in attempting to understand how such phenomena arise.

It is those who dismiss or attack such efforts who are culpable. Why does not Mauge, or *Magonia* in general, turn their critical faculties back on themselves, and produce a sociological study of the extraordinary negative and hostile initial response to the earth lights theory?

Mauge, Rutowski and others, are all so readily omit from their view of earth lights theory that it is already known, accepted and established that the earth can produce atmospheric luminescent phenomena (earthquake lights) and has been reliably photographed in time-lapse sequences. So a mechanism similar to UFO light

phenomena is known to exist, if, as yet, also incompletely understood.

In the light of all the above work, and much more, it is therefore both annoying and saddening to note the comment in David Taylor's letter in *Magonia* 24 that earth lights theory is "a worthwhile idea, desperately in need of more scientific study". I agree it is worthwhile, but it has graduated far beyond the level of a mere 'idea' and it has more scientific work being carried out on it than any, I repeat any other UFO theory, whether ETH, psychosociological or Stuart Campbell's 'stars' theory. Moreover it is also true that I have been able to sit down with physicists carrying out the most advanced quantum work, and co-operate with leading geologists here and in America, while it has proven less easy to do so with ufologists. Earth lights theory has shown up the inadequacy of genuine intellectual and scientific credibility within areas of British ufology. That has been one of its greatest, if most unfortunate, achievements.

No-one is saying that everyone should swallow the whole earth lights theory hook, line and sinker, but it is a highly credible theory, it is regularly producing stronger evidence, and it is highly desirable that such an area be fully investigated.

I feel the evidence is currently pointing to the fact that we are at last beginning to identify an energy phenomenon that may have much to teach us. The very recent discovery by Brady *et al* that laboratory-produced rock lights are *not* plasmas (the lights do not produce micro-waves), and show only spectrographic information of the medium (whether gas or liquid) they are occurring in, underlines these points.

We are entering an exciting realm of hitherto unexplained energy effects. I believe the energy may be sensitive to consciousness, and am attempting to assemble the necessary experimental elements to test such an idea. The implications cannot yet be discerned, other than to suggest they are going to be momentous.

Brady's suggestion that we may be dealing here with another candidate for the origins of life on earth is a possible example of this, even if it supremely ironic. It will be sad indeed if ufological thinkers cannot rise to the challenge.

HILARY EVANS
rounds off the debate by
looking at the range of options,
suggesting questions to ask,
and finding few answers as yet

EARTHLIGHTS

There are few things seemingly so simple but potentially so complex as a ball of light. The phrase itself is ambiguous: does ball mean sphere or spheroid or spherical, does light mean light source or luminosity, and so on. Here are some of the things a BOL may be:

A physical object in its own right, as for instance:

- ball lightning,
- earthquake lights,
- Saint Elmo's fire, *feux follets*, etc.,
- plasma phenomena generated by electrical conditions not yet understood.

A hallucinated form, as for instance:

- a false perception due to a simple malfunction of the perceptive organs, but communicated to the brain which of course can make nothing of the signal,
- a true perception by the senses of something which they are unable to present to the brain in any form which the brain can make sense of
- the consequence of the brain receiving a triggering effect causing it to project an archetypal form from the collective unconscious.

*An organic creature which has normally no visible appearance capable of being detected by human senses, but chooses, either deliberately or *faute de mieux* this basic form as a means of making its presence known.*

The preliminary form of a psychic materialisation in which the material (ectoplasm) assumes this basic form before further development.

The consequence of, or a phase during, an event on the astral plane which is in the process of effecting an interface with the physical plane.

I shall resist the temptation to proliferate further examples of the hypotheses which have been proposed, generally perfectly seriously, by researchers at one time or another. Various schools of esoteric Thought tend to refer to spiritual essences making their presence felt in the form of BOLs, and much the same seems to be true of religious phenomena which manifest to mystics. The literature is vast.

So vast indeed, that it would seem as though the BOL can be all things to all persons, and in the face of such an *embarrass de richesses* one might feel there is little point in trying to make any general analysis of the BOL phenomenon *per se*. Rather, it would be argued, treat each BOL-like manifestation as a phenomenon in its own right. But we don't have to give up so early. For though BOL-like things

turn up in so many contexts, and do so many different things, and carry such a variety of significances, the fact remains that *au fond* these must all fall into two categories:

1. a physical object
2. a non-physical non-object

which indicates two lines along which we may proceed in search of answers to two sets of questions. Firstly, what kinds of objects are liable to manifest as physical BOLs? What circumstances cause or enable them to manifest? What have such physical BOLs in common, and how do they differ?

Secondly, what kind of process can cause someone to believe they see a BOL? What circumstances cause or enable this process to occur? What have such circumstances in common,

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and how may they differ?

BOLs as Physical Phenomenon

That there are certain kinds of physical object which manifest in the form of BOLs is established fact. Ball lightning is only one of the natural phenomena of this kind and it is known that similar (or at any rate *seemingly* similar) phenomena can be artificially produced in the vicinity of power lines or within power stations.

The extent of our knowledge of these phenomena is still very limited, but the fact that some are known to exist encourages us to suppose, provisionally, that other ostensibly similar phenomena are equally real. Earthquake Lights are one example, and a browse through the Corliss catalogues indicates just how remarkable a variety of anomalous phenomena have been reported in all places at all times and under all kinds of meteorological conditions. No systematic investigation has been carried out on the vast majority of these phenomena, and certainly no attempt has been made at a comparative study. It has been left to amateurs like Vincent Gaddis to recognise the value of a comparative approach.

Things being so, it would be premature to match up any specific observation to any speculative model. The most we can say is that if residents of the Norwegian valley of Hessdalen report a UFO (in the literal meaning of the phrase) which they describe in terms similar to other BOLs, we may reasonably hypothesise that the UFO may be a physical BOL of some kind.

Which doesn't seem to have got us very far; except that, methodologically, it encourages us to try to match our vast collection of one-off unknowns (UFO reports) with phenomena which are not quite so unknown. We may not know all that we ought to know about ball lightning, for example, but we know enough about it to appreciate to what extent a 'foo-fighter' shares the same characteristics and to what extent it doesn't.

So we applaud the efforts of researchers such as Devereux and Persinger to relate *some kinds of UFO to some kinds of natural phenomena*. In practice those efforts have hitherto failed to achieve convincing results, but this is no reflection on these and other researchers in the field, whose pioneering efforts in hitherto unknown territory are

all the more to be applauded when the going is evidently so tough. Rather, their work is a challenge for the rest of us to contribute by, firstly, amassing as much data as possible on each category of phenomena; secondly by defining each of those categories as precisely as possible; and thirdly by matching them up or indicating the differences.

If for example we could establish that the physical properties of the artificially induced BOLs in power stations were identical with those of ball lightning, this could be expected to give us valuable information about how ball-lightning is initiated. If we knew the maximum duration of ball lightning we would know whether the Hessdalen phenomena, which have been observed over 20-minute periods, could conceivably be of this nature. If it turned out that the Hessdalen phenomena were similar to ball lightning in all properties save duration, we could start to establish how a normally short-lived phenomena can become a 20-minute-surviving one. Maybe it thrives on low temperature?

Organic UFOs redivivus

In the early days of flying saucers, that fascinating researcher the Countess Wassilo-Serecki proposed that UFOs are organic phenomena from Earth's atmosphere. Similar notions were entertained by Bessor and Constable. Though most of us have been tempted to relegate the organic-UFO to the compost heap of ufology, it is possible that we have been over-hasty. Now that Persinger *et cie* are proposing natural phenomena as candidates for UFO observations, perhaps we should give the Countess's organisms a second look.

BOLs as psychological phenomena.

Even if BOLs exist as physical objects, intelligent or not, organic or not, they fall lamentably short of being able to account for the observations of structured objects (henceforth SOB) which form a large proportion of UFO reports.

Occasionally a BOL is reported as being so bright that the observer is unable to tell whether it has any shape or not, in which case we may speculate that there may be a SOB concealed within/behind the BOL. There are other reports in which a UFO starts as a BOL which develops into a SOB, but in the vast majority of cases there is

a fundamental difference between BOLs and SOBs.

The reasonable inference is that there are at least two fundamental types of UFO: the BOL and the SOB. However, some researchers have sought ways of reducing this to one, employing the following logical process:

- 1) We know that BOLs exist
- 2) We have no good reason to suppose that SOBs exist
- 3) So it is reasonable to suppose that SOBs are misinterpreted BOLs.

Grounds for this can be found in reports of many investigators. Hendry, Monnerie and Randles are just three who have reported instances in which a witness has reported as a SOB an object which (since it was clearly established as a planet or a satellite) must necessarily have been visible only as a BOL.

Those who do not recognise the existence of BOLs *per se*, such as Monnerie, take the further step of assuming that SOB = BOL is equivalent to SOB = natural phenomenon or misidentification. However, if BOLs exist in their own right, this does not necessarily follow.

The more sophisticated re-searchers acknowledge that there is more to the BOL than simple natural phenomena. Very interesting suggestions along these lines have been made by Devereux and Persinger, among others. Devereux appears to be more inclined to esoteric approaches, Persinger tends to keep to more traditional psychological lines; but both have shown themselves commendably open-minded in their recognition that we must go beyond current scientific knowledge for an explanation. Both Devereux and Persinger speculate that the BOL triggers off a mental process which results in the observer having the illusion of seeing a SOB. This illusion is the creation of the observer's subconscious mind, reflecting its hopes, fears, preoccupations and expectations on the one hand, and on the other the archetypes available to him and authorised by his cultural milieu.

[There is a variant on this which speculates that the hallucination of the UFO may be fed into the witness's brain from outside. Guérin and Monnerie are among those who have toyed with this induced-dream process in one form or another.]

That processes exist whereby

this kind of illusion can be created is, I believe, beyond doubt. It has been suggested that processes of this sort are responsible for the great majority of so-called visionary experiences and UFO encounter/abduction scenarios. It remains an open question though, whether this is what is happening in the case of 'conventional' SOB-UFO observations.

As a hypothesis it is of great interest, but we still lack the necessary evidence of cause (BOL) leading to effect (SOB), despite Persinger's strenuous efforts to provide it from statistical analysis of geophysical events on the one hand and UFO sightings on the other. His correlations are suggestive, but they are far from being overwhelmingly convincing, as Rutkowski and Mauge, among others, have demonstrated.

Awkward questions have yet to be answered:

- Some UFOs have been reported by multiple witnesses. Are we to suppose that in such cases the same stimulus caused a number of people, often independent one from another, to have the same illusory experience? Some processes have been proposed - a *folie à deux*, mass hysteria, multiple hypnosis - but none of these has yet to be proved a reality. And there are numerous examples of multiple sightings in which there is not the slightest reason to suppose that any such process is operative.

- Some UFOs allegedly leave physical traces. Are we to suppose that this is mere coincidence? Or are they effects of the BOL; in which case there should be clear indications of the nature of the physical phenomenon responsible.

- Some BOL-UFOs allegedly behave as if intelligent. If this is so, are we to suppose that these BOLs are true UFOs, just as much as the SOBs? It is interesting that the best-attested instances are those in which investigation of a more than usually scientific quality is being carried out - Rutledge's *Project Identification* and the Norwegian - Swedish *Project Hessdalen*; could it be that UFOs manifest to serious researchers as BOLs, to others as SOBs? With so many unanswered questions it would be absurd to attempt any conclusions. But the mere fact that there are researchers thinking along these lines, posing these questions, is the most promising development in ufology for many a decade.

These may not be the most sensational cases in the UFO literature; but we stand to learn more from these long despised lights-in-the-sky than from cases with far more dramatic content

All UFO research *must* start with the observations of witnesses: these must then be set in a context which embodies every parameter which could conceivably be relevant. The more deeply we probe the UFO problem the more parameters seem to come into play.

We have long since learned that simple noting of the circumstances, as seemed adequate in the days of NICAP, is so rudimentary as to be useless. Today we have recognised the importance of witness evaluation before we even begin to act upon what that witness reported.

And in the analysis of that report we have learnt that the data we need spans the range from geophysical events at one extreme, to the psycho-social environment at the other - and furthermore, the interaction between the two.

The mountain lights investigated by Harley Rutledge, the Hessdalen lights, the Yakima observations - these may not be the most sensational cases in the UFO literature; but we stand to learn more from these long despised lights in the sky than from cases with far more dramatic content.

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UFOLOGY AND STATISTICS: THE CASE OF POHER'S FILE

Claude Mauge

INTRODUCTION

Statistics have an important role in ufology, either to 'prove' the reality of the UFO phenomenon or to describe it. However, some questions arise from the fact that the files are not necessarily representative of the phenomenon and that they contain many dubious cases.

One of the most important statistical studies in ufology is Claude Poher's (5), which was for long highly considered in France but seems to be seldom mentioned in the American and British literature (A) except for the Poher and Vallée paper in *Flying Saucer Review*. (8)

However, Poher's file and statistics were the subject of some criticisms. (2,10) As for me, I had in 1978-79 the intention to use Poher's list as a 'highly reliable' cases file, but I discovered several errors in the codification. Therefore, I later checked the sources in a systematic way, and this paper is a summary of my findings. (B)

THE '825' CASES FILE AND POHER'S STATISTICS: A BRIEF SURVEY

Poher starts with about 1000 UFO reports, essentially collected from the ufological literature (C) with the assistance of some anonymous volunteers. (D) The dubious cases are removed; the 'classical' observations coming from several sources are put together. Poher thus obtains a list of '825 sightings', the main characteristics of which are coded on punched cards (a maximum of 80 characters for each case).

The cards are then used in a classical but copious statistical study. (5) Many features are examined: spatial and temporal locations; witnesses (number, age, occupations...); sighting conditions (weather, duration, distance...); description and behaviour of the UFOs (number, form, dimensions, colour, path...) and of the UFOs; etc. But these statistics are essentially frequency distributions, with only a few exceptions. (E) A summary of

the main results was published by Poher in two UFO journals. (6)

Poher shows in a later paper (7) that the witnesses have really seen something, because the number of aerial UFOs respects the laws of optics; a comparison between the durations of UFOs and known phenomena then allows him to conclude that the sighted phenomenon is an unknown one. The basic points of these results are finally used again and expanded in the article by Poher and Vallée, (8) which is said to 'provide perhaps the most important evidence yet produced to demonstrate that the UFO can be representative of a new phenomenon'. (9)

THE WEAKNESSES OF THE '825' CASES FILE

The number of cases. The first problem we meet is the important difference between the alleged and actual numbers of cases: Poher claims he used a world file of 825 cases, but his list actually contains 736 cases. The difference is due to the 'classical' sightings, which were correctly put

together in one item in the list, but are erroneously used separately in the statistics; these are supported on 825 'cases'. On the other hand, the French list, the cases of which are extracted from the world one, contains 220 cases as Poher says.

Moreover, the elimination of the multicoded cases is not very careful. I was able to check 539 world cases; in this set there are still 20 cases which are coded twice and 3 cases which are coded three times. Mistakes or imprecisions in the sources excuse such doubles for little-known observations, but not for famous sightings such as the Exeter or Valensole ones. So there are at best 710 cases in Poher's list - including 216 French cases, 5 of which are not located in France by Poher.

The quality of the cases. We can first note that some sources are not very reliable, particularly the books by von Däniken, Misraki and Guieu. But let us 'forget' this, and let us use two parameters to assess the quality of the cases. All the following data concern 449 world cases which I carefully compared with the sources.

I rated the 'case length' (that is, the length of the report in the source) by comparison with the average page length of the journal *Phénomènes spatiaux*, which is the source mostly used by Poher and the first I checked.

There are in the list 40% of 'short cases', with less than half a column of *Phénomènes spatiaux* (fewer than 1400 characters); there are also 40% of 'medium cases', with between half a column and a page of *Phénomènes spatiaux* (1400-5600 characters), and 20% of 'long cases' with more than a page. There are in particular 72 cases with fewer than 200 characters (5 lines!), such as the following: "4 October 1844: Astronomer Glaisier reports 'luminous discs which send quick light waves'" - these are the only words about the sighting in the source!

Now if we take an interest in the reliability of the cases we realize that the file contains few explained cases (4.9%) and too few sound cases (38 = 8.5%). But there are many dubious cases (21.6%) which seem easily explainable by mundane phenomena, and a strong majority (292 = 65%) of inconclusive cases the reliability on non-reducibility of which are hard to estimate. A

'serious' investigation is mentioned for only 20.7% of cases, and a precise reference for 55% of all cases.

If we decide that the too-short cases and the dubious ones must be taken out of the file, we must eliminate 236 cases (53%) from the set I checked. A cautious extrapolation leads to the elimination of 43% from the whole world set; there would remain only 418 cases, which is half of the alleged '825' cases...

The carefulness of the coding. Indeed any coding work contains some mistakes, but they seem to be a little too numerous and quite serious in Poher's file. The coding error rate is very close to 10% (average coding errors; 3.0; average number of characters used; 34.3, four of which are the number of the case).

Lake Titicaca
is located among the
great African lakes
and New South Wales
in Great Britain

One quarter of the cases contain one or several serious errors. Among the 449 cases I found: 34 serious date errors (often a confusion between the sighting date and the publication date); 36 serious place errors, such as Lake Titicaca located among the great African lakes or New South Wales in Great Britain; several sightings are mixed together 13 times; and so on. The coding is sometimes fanciful; for instance when the entity's head 'looked like an enormous tuft of hair' it is coded 'enormous and bald head!'. Several of these serious mistakes falsely reinforce the apparent reliability of the observations; a simple deposition at the police station is coded 'official investigation' 15 times, an amateur astronomer is twice coded 'professional astronomer', strollers 'coming back after a botanical walk' become 'researchers', etc.

POHER'S REPLY TO MY CRITICISMS

I sent my paper to Poher before it appeared in *OVNI Presence*. In a private letter, Poher replied to none of my basic criticisms and said nothing about the 825/736 difference in the number of cases. His only arguments were the following: 1) The work was a statistical study of UFO reports, of which the coding errors are a part, not a study

of UFO sightings - This is true, but the weaknesses seem to have their origin in the fact that Poher had not verified what his anonymous collaborators coded and how they worked - ; 2) The study was totally voluntary - It is a mitigating circumstance, to a certain extent only - ; 3) A 10% error rate is low - His rate is nearer 20%, so I was not severe enough - ; 4) My work is a negative one; it would have been positive if I had corrected the mistakes and computed the statistics again - It is true, but my purpose was to show that the ufological building rests on flimsy foundations - ; 5) Poher deliberately compelled his collaborators not to select the sightings - This statement totally contradicts Poher's other claims - ; 6) My motivations were not very honest because I could have consulted the cases forms at GEPAN instead of spending so much time searching for the cases in the UFO literature - Of course! (see (4) above).

SOME NOTES ON THE STATISTICS

The initial statistics (5,6). I don't know if the above criticisms are sufficient to destroy the reliability of the initial statistics which use directly and solely the '825 cases' file. In any case, the most serious problem is that the statistics were computed with 825 'cases' and not 736 (which are in fact 710 distinct cases at the maximum); this means that the computer worked with a minimum of 115 duplicate cases, without 'knowing' it!

Moreover, charts in (5) present results for French sightings and foreign sightings (see Figure 1), but the latter are in fact world cases, including the French ones. This mistake will be found again in following papers (7,8).

The ARLAB study. The ARLAB Society made a factor analysis of the 736 cases file for GEPAN; this number indicates that it apparently used the 736 punched cards, not the '825 cases' list. The main conclusions of the study are as follows. The data set is very little structured and it is very difficult to build a typology of the sightings; please note that this contradicts Poher's rather firm conclusions. (6) The most discriminatory variables seem to be the distance and duration of the sightings. Some groups of characteristics

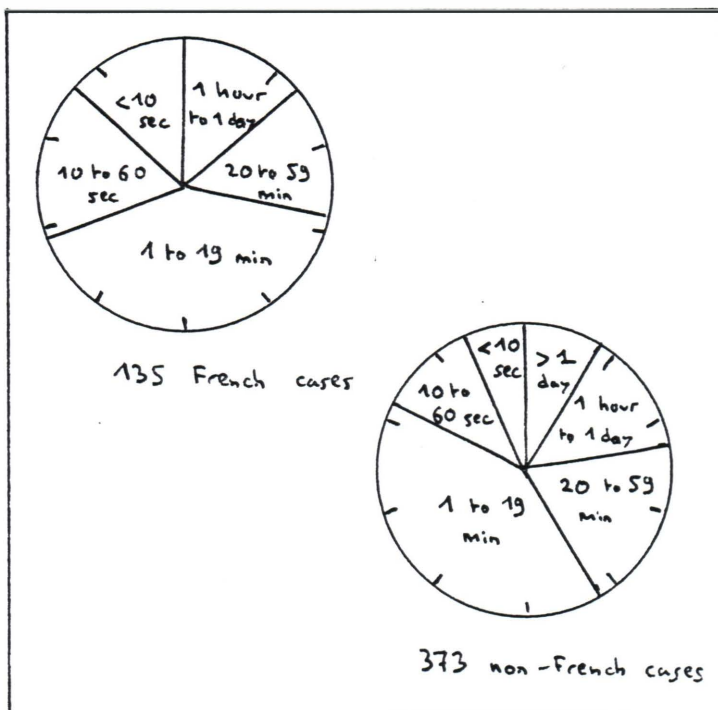


Figure 1. Sighting duration; comparison between French and non-French cases, according to Poher (5) and Poher and Vallée (8). Poher (5) indicates explicitly that there are no French cases lasting more than one day.

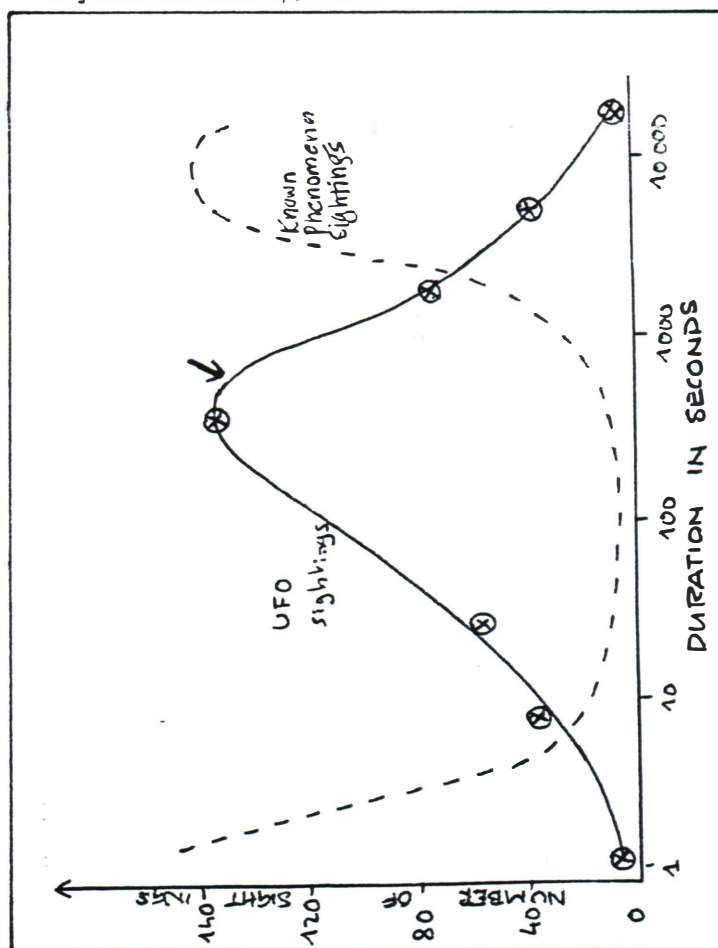


Figure 2. Number of reports as a function of duration for UFOs and known phenomena, according to Poher (7) and Poher and Vallée (8).

Please note that the known phenomena curve has a slightly different form in Poher and Vallée. Arrow shows the position of the additional point in (8).

seem to emerge, 'the interpretation of which could be quite simple'; actually I think that these groups could be interpreted as meteors, stars/planets, and aeroplanes. 'It seems to be useful to eliminate several sightings from the file and to start the analysis again with the remaining cases'; what a confirmation for my own analysis! Did Poher assess the ARLAB study as a 'negative' one with 'not very honest motivations'?

'Derived' statistics. The case of sighting duration. 'Derived' statistics are presented in two papers, (7,8) the second of which is the famous Poher and Vallée FSR article; they give new results, but also use results which are taken directly from the initial statistics. (5) So they confuse non-French sightings with world ones; this is so for sighting duration, the distance to the UFO, and the population density in type-1 cases in the FSR article.

The 'information processing' of sighting durations deserves our interest because it is rather strange (see Figures 1 and 2). First, the 373 'foreign' cases are or course world cases - including the 135 French sightings; don't let us forget too that the actual number is fewer because the doubles were not eliminated. Then the percentages in the 'non-French' chart (Figure 1) correspond only partly to the raw results, and the percentage for observations lasting more than one day (more or less 8%) is absurd. Poher can be totally excused for the initial mistake in (5), where it was swamped by thousands of data, but I am amazed that 'experts' such as Poher and Vallée reproduced the chart without comment in their FSR paper. Moreover, the abscissae of the points in Figure 2 are rather arbitrary; D. Breyse (3) points out that the shape of the UFO curve has therefore no meaning, and that the construction of the known-phenomena curve is totally arbitrary.

Last but not least, Poher and Vallée reproduce the curves from *L'Aéronautique et l'Astronautique* in the *Flying Saucer Review*, but something curious happened during the process to the UFO curve; an additional point is shown in FSR (see arrow in Figure 2), so that the total number of cases is actually close to the mentioned '508 cases'. Apparently, the curve itself is not wrong (F)

but it seems that 'someone' (who?) added one point to the curve in order to obtain the '508' 'expected' cases! Would not an unfortunate combination of circumstances have led to a true data manipulation?

CONCLUSION

I cannot say I have proved that Poher's statistics have no value. However, I think there are enough NOTES

grounds for having some doubts about their validity: the difference between the 825 alleged cases, which were used in the statistical calculations, and the 736 'actual' cases in the list is for me sufficient. But this is after all only one of the numerous examples which show how competent scientists forget their professional methodology and skills when they deal with ufology...

- A. There is no mention of Poher's work in Sach's *The UFO Encyclopedia*. Story's encyclopedia (11) contains only three allusions to Poher's statistics (pp. 132, 159, 160) but the first one concerns the *FSR* paper. J. Randles mentions the latter several times, but apparently never Poher's initial results.
- B. The results were first published in *OVNI Présence* (4). I refer to this paper for the exposition of my methodology, and for many details and examples. I thank Marie Diez for her revision of my translation into English.
- C. Reviews *Phénomènes spatiaux* and *Lumières dans la nuit*: books by von Däniken, Edwards (2), Guieu, Lorenzen (2), Vallée, the Condon report, etc. There are also French official reports (69 cases) and three directly connected testimonies.
- D. According to R. Fouéré and R. Westrum in Story's encyclopedia, the Groupement d'Etude de Phénomènes Aériens (GEPA - please don't confuse it with GEPAN), which published *Phénomènes spatiaux*, was largely involved in the initial work ((11) p. 60).
- E. This does not concern the study of correlations between UFO sightings and geomagnetic disturbances, which uses a partly different data base and which is excluded from my review. S. Campbell was very severe with the geomagnetic correlation study in *FSR*, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 28-iii.
- F. as I wrote it wrongly in ((4), p. 39).

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LETTERS



As a result of his booklet (written with Granville Oldroyd, 1985) David Clarke and I corresponded during 1986 on the matter of 'spooklights' and Will-of-the-Wisp. I pointed out to him that there was a simple explanation for reports of such objects, namely that they are stars, but seen at such low altitude that their true nature was not recognised. At near-the-horizon altitudes bright stars (and planets) suffer several atmospheric distortions including magnification under calm conditions due to abnormal refraction.

In addition observers of an isolated light tend to see it flit about due to autokinesis. Very many of the reports in *Spooklights* describe autokinesis, a phenomenon which led some to believe that the object was a luminous owl! Another clue is the fact that on many occasions the light could not be reached even though it was followed for a great distance. An object seen repeatedly in the same spot is most likely to be an astronomical body. Thus Keel was almost certainly seeing stars in 1967. The illusions of the approach of such a star is caused by an increase in brightness (and/or size) as noted by Mr T. Singleton; the light he saw did not pass over him because it could not do so. Most observers, because they do not know the true nature of the light, assume that it is relatively close. They have neither size nor distance clues and so make (incorrect) guesses about both parameters. In complete darkness observers may (wrongly) assume that a light is below their horizon.

Literature on Will-of-the-Wisp is sparse (and mainly anecdotal) but it does support the view that the phenomenon is merely the result of

misinterpretation of stars. It is likely that it is associated with marshy ground because such ground is usually flat, extensive and treeless, so offering a good view towards the horizon.

Mills has shown that a chemical explanation for Will-of-the-Wisp is not viable, but he was unaware that the problem he was trying to solve is not a problem at all. Since the lights do not have any connection with marshy ground (or the Earth at all) there is no point in trying to find a chemical explanation. It is not scientists who have labelled Will-of-the-Wisp *ignis fatuus*; the ancients gave the phenomenon that name. Today science is not aware of the existence of any phenomenon of this nature.

Because of the lack of details I was not able to identify most of the lights reported in *Spooklights*, but in some cases identification was possible. The 'Whitburn Light' was Arcturus, and some other lights could be identified as Sirius and Vega, the lights seen from the Burton Dassett Hills were probably stars, but lack of detail made identification impossible. A light seen by an Admiralty Intelligence Officer over Dartmoor in 1915 could be identified as the planet Jupiter seen through intermittent cloud.

I feel confident that given adequate details all the lights could be identified. The lights reported during the Welsh Revival of 1905 and those more recently reported from Hessdalen in Norway have the same explanation; they are all astronomical objects. There is no connection between the lights and geological faults; the Tectonic Strain Theory (as Claude Maugé shows in *Magonia* 24) is flawed.

In view of Clarke's uncritical reference to The Dragon project I must say that Robbin's account (*Circles of Stone*, 1985) is a rambling, speculative work, long on anecdotes and ideas and short on scientific data. It contains silly diagrams and meaningless graphs, but absolutely no evidence that the circles are anything but silent! Robbins has failed to interest the scientific community in his Project, and I predict that he never will.

Steuart Campbell, Edinburgh

Dear John

Jenny Randles' follow-up to our Allingham exposé requires a few comments. It is not true to say, as she has, that Patrick Moore threatened her with a lawsuit when she challenged him in 1983. She kindly showed me his reply, and however evasive it was, he made no such threat. All he said was that he might take some (unspecified) action against me if I went too far. A similar useless reply he gave me said that if I wanted to publish anything I should contact his solicitors first. Hardly the same as a lawsuit.

The question was not that Steuart and I had claimed that PM was the author (assuming of course that we had got the right man) but that we had 'honourable intentions' and were not out to smear his character. A similar warning was given me by the editor of *New Scientist*. Therefore it was not the exposé itself that was risky, merely the wording of certain portions of it.

As regards Moore, of course he ought to have been debunked long, long ago, and in fact the evidence to do this was present back in 1954. Only one month after *Flying Saucer from Mars* came out another Moore book appeared from the same publisher: *Suns, Myths and Men*. The story of Galileo told there matches the one in *FSM* very closely in certain words and phrases, almost as if he had written them both on the same day. It would have required a real stroke of genius for anyone to have spotted this, but it was all there at the time.

I have often wondered if anyone ever suspected him back in those early days, and whether they challenged him then. Alas, only one man can answer that.

The chief victims of the spoof seem to have been Desmond Leslie, Lord Dowding and Waveney Sirvan. Dowding was chairman of the meeting where 'Allingham' made his sole appearance, while Sirvan was also taken in by Moore's chicanery in 1963 over the Charlton Crater fiasco. As it was, the book achieved several foreign editions and was, for true believers, a great boost to the Adamski story.

I predict that Moore will keep his mouth shut on UFOs in future, but if not readers can now give him a dose of his own medicine, and relegate all his anti-UFO ravings to the bin.

Christopher Allan, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent.

Dear John

To comment briefly on Chris Allen's letter. Firstly, I do not have the reply which Moore sent me in 1983. Peter Warrington has the file material, but cannot trace it since moving. He shares my feeling about the specific nature of Moore's threat, having seen the letter more recently than I.

The letter I sent Moore advised him that Chris Allan had uncovered evidence of what he had done. I made it clear that it was not my place or intention to publish, but that the original researcher may do so. I suggested that Moore come clean himself before the media found out. In his curt reply he did, to my recollection, make a quite specific threat of legal action if the story was published. His wording was 'you', which I took in the context as directed at me personally.

I obviously have no desire to court any action from the astronomer and would not lay claim to this threat if it was not a sincere interpretation I placed upon the wording of Moore's reply. From what Chris Allen says it is evident Moore did have legal action in mind; you hardly tell someone to contact his solicitor otherwise.

I would just like to confirm that the story as it appeared in the Peter Tory column in *The Star* was a total fabrication as far as anything attributed to me is concerned. My total conversation with Tory was as quoted on page 20 of the last *Magonia*. I was

particularly anxious *not* to become involved in any controversy involving a major BBC personality, as I was at that time in the final stages of producing my BBC radio series.

Of course, the promises of journalists are not worth tuppence, as most of us realise. The worst thing I did was not to put the phone down on Tory the moment he said who he was. Any connection between the truth and what Tory said in his features (about Allingham and Prince Charles) seems to be pure coincidence!

Jenny Randles, Warrington.

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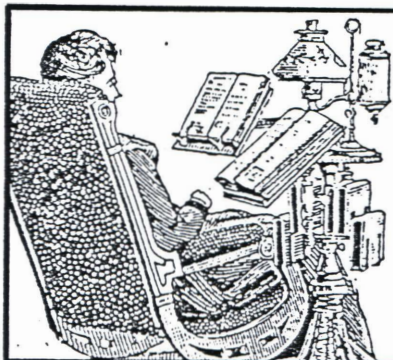
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BOOK REVIEWS

GELLER, Uri and Guy Lyon PLAYFAIR, *The Geller Effect*, Jonathan Cape, 1986, £10.95.

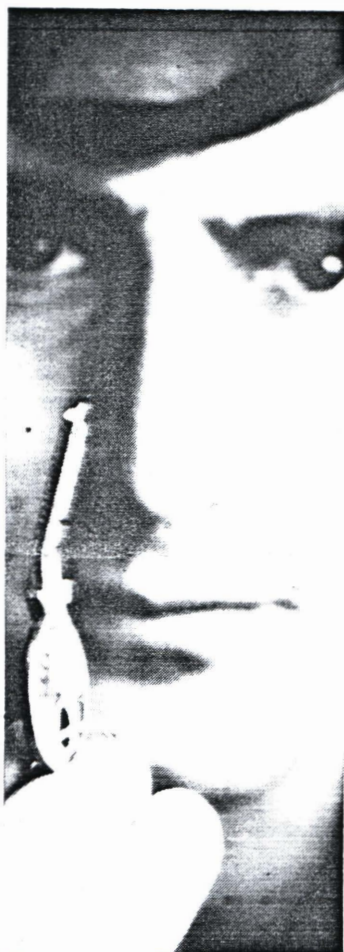
Uri Geller (or Spurious Feller as Nina Myskow might prefer) sits down with Gullible Guy, a crate of Barbican and a box of bagels to chronicle the latest escapades in the life and times of the Cutlery Kid. And what times! Dowsing for the Mexican President (Here's a million dollars, Uri, find me some gold) - Geller's technique: flying along in a light aircraft with his hand out of the window!

Spying for the FBI (Just have a psychic peep into the Russian Embassy, Uri, and tell us what's what), Geller takes a walk round the block and gives his 'impressions'.

Boogying with the international jet-set - Adnam Khassogi's birthday bash - Geller bends a spoon and implants 'peace' into the camel jockey's billion dollar brain. It is all the stuff of legend. If detractors such as the Great Randi read this lot they will be foaming at the mouth. Because, fair do's, you have to hand it to Geller; for a man whose main claim to fame is that he can paranormally bend spoons (cor! what a useful gift) he has made himself a millionaire (cor! what a very useful gift).

And perhaps that is the point. Uri calls himself 'an entertainer' throughout the book and that is just what he is. If the wealthy, greedy for even more bucks, fork out (fork - geddit?) vast sums to employ his wild talents then who can blame him for taking them up on their offers?

But what of the Geller Effect? Well the book tells us, as many others have done, precisely nothing. Geller says



he doesn't know how he does, but does it he does - to great Effect.

There is an interesting section penned by Gullible Guy, who really should have his wrists slapped for falling for some very simple parlour tricks (Uri's infant son's airline mind-reading trick being a good example) about P.K. parties held in the U.S.A. which have proved that Geller's feats can be accomplished by groups using relatively simple techniques.

Basically the book is nothing more than what one might expect; a P.R. job for Geller.

There is a thorough whitewash of the notorious "I am a representative of the Cosmic Masterrace, 'The Nine'" disclosures which the embarrassed Uri would prefer forgotten (see him squirm on the Wogan show?). Great emphasis is placed on the Golden Spoon-bender's honesty and integrity - he's just a nice Jewish boy.

But moral questions should be asked. If Geller is, beneath the surface of the World Famous Entertainer, to any degree altruistic, why doesn't he put his 'powers' to good use? For a man who can interface with the molecules of teaspoons and scramble computer discs, why not do something really constructive and juggle a few human molecules and cure AIDS for instance?

I am inclined to think that Geller does possess powers, as did Rasputin and Crowley. I am also similarly inclined to think that we can expect about as much from him as we did from them.

Of course, this may be just sour grapes on my part - I for instance do a passable Charles Laughton impersonation, and my Cary grant has been hailed as uncanny, but do I get a Royal Command Performance? Does anybody offer me a million dollars to waggle my head out of a light aircraft window? I should be so lucky! *Robert Rankin*

McEWAN, Graham, *Mystery Animals of Britain and Ireland*, Robert Hale Ltd, 1986, £9.95.

Saying that this is the best survey of British cryptozoology since the Bords' classic *Alien Animals* of 1980 isn't saying very much at all. Publishers have been unfor- givably slow to latch on to

the potential of our phantom felines, sea-serpents, Nessie-lookalikes and the other strange life that teems in the pages of Fortean journals.

Presented in a format that owes much to the Bord work *Mystery Animals...* McEwan isn't daunted by the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Selecting from the best in print, and throwing in some researches of his own. He covers a lot of awkward ground and mostly with fine economy; I wouldn't have thought it possible to see the Surrey Puma covered in just ten pages and yet find myself thinking that not much more needed to be said. The author avoids cluttering his text and dulling the appetite as he moves from report to report, steadily but not stolidly. Novices to the field need something like this, and they will find it captivating. Experiences Forteaners may not be as rooted to the page, but I'd be surprised if they don't find something new here.

The book opens with a look at big-cat sightings; arguably the best chapter of the book insofar as a lot of it *will* be new to all but a handful of specialists, and even here Mr McEwan offers fresh information elicited by his appeals in local and regional papers.

The text proceeds via sea serpents - emphasis here on Morgawr - to lake monsters. The treatment of the Loch Ness Monster may seem less than 100% successful, but only when you consider that if all the literature on it were dropped in the Loch you could probably walk dry-foot from Inverness to Fort Augustus. Yet the accounts are well-selected, and McEwan scores by stressing the dry land sightings of the Monster.

The following Black Dog chapter reinforces a suspicion which has been introduced without cramming it down readers' throats; that at time these ostensibly flesh and blood animals seem to possess downright unworldly properties. The big cats parade through built-up areas, yet leave few physical traces of their going; Irish water monsters are reported from loughs scarcely bigger than ponds; cameras take it upon themselves to malfunction at crucial moments.

By now a subtle change of tone

has come over the book; as the number of skinned pages decreases, so the diversity of the animals, and it must be said, their incredibility, increases. Careering through the last 50 pages are Owlman, Wildmen, Wolfmen, the Borley Bug, the Staffs Monkey-Man... and since you ask, the Brentford Griffin is here as well on p. 153.



These accounts are fascinating in their way. The question is whether some of them really belong in a book about mystery animals. Isn't there a qualitative difference, between say Morgawr and the Big Grey Man or Ben MacDhui, all 20-30 feet of him? The author would probably reply that we certainly need the Big Grey Man *et al* because the help make a case for regarding mystery animals as part of a broader, continuous tradition of entities which assume animal shapes. To him there is only a difference of degree between a phantom feline, and the bi-pedal crop-eared 'hare' that haunted Abbey House in Cambridgeshire. So inclusion of these bizzarrities underlines the argument that where mystery animals are concerned, a straight choice between deciding they are physically real or things partaking of a more para-physical nature isn't easy.

This is a very good book then. Some may feel it would be better still for the inclusion of more analysis of specific incidents and more theoretical discussion, even if that meant giving the Big Grey Man and the Borley bug the chop.

Space permitting there are questions we could have hoped to see posed, even though they aren't likely to have been answered. If mystery animals are mental effects, we need to look closer at where the source material comes from (and of course how it gets here) as well as its symbolic function... if any. On the rationalist side, we need to look at how known animals may relate to what's going on; I'm thinking especially of the growing suspicion that feral cats may be more than slightly connected with aspects of the 'phantom feline' business.

Michael Goss,

SKINNER, Bob, *Toad in the Hole: source material on the Entombed Toad Phenomenon*, Fortean Times Occasional Papers No. 2, 1986, \$1.50.

Like the animals of the title, *Fortean Times's* Occasional Papers series has been resurrected after lengthy quiescence, and this scholarly study shows that the project is still full of life - not always the case with the entombed toads featured in reports culled by Bob Skinner across a 200-year period.

"A brief overview of the literature" paves the way for Robert Plot's discussion of the phenomenon and its possible causes (1696), followed by *Annual Register's* 1791 extract of cases translated from the French of Delafond. The longest section of the monograph comes care of Philip Henry Gosse (*The Romance of Natural History*) which quotes the classic but slightly misleading Buckland experiments when a number of toads were put to the immurement test under controlled conditions - and fared rather better than later writers seemed to have realised.

Balancing this, Andrew Wilson's barely-polite and not-too-persuasive *Leisure Time Studies* piece (1879) seeks to reduce the thing to "tales... devoid of actual foundation". But consider the final section on 'Some eye-witness account' ranging from c. 1575-1943 and you may concur when Bob Skinner remarks that sceptical demolitions of the Wilson type fail to recognise a most salient point: the accounts of the entombed toads need to be divorced from all the fanciful and improbable theories which attempted to explain them. The price paid for such speculation was that the flaws in thinking tended to discredit the accounts themselves, but it seems that the modern zoologists quoted on page 6 are more enlightened. In short, after years of neglect the accounts are now more or less taken as acceptable - regardless of what the explanation behind them might be.

Supported by extensive foot-noting and a bibliography that is worth the price on its own, *Toad in the Hole* can't fail to become a standard text. And it ought to remain that way until the author has a chance to supercede it with a much longer, still more detailed toad study which he's currently preparing. Ambitious publishers, please take note!

Michael Goss

NEWMAN, Paul, *Gods and Graven Images: the chalk hill figures of Britain*, Robert Hale, 1987, £12.95.

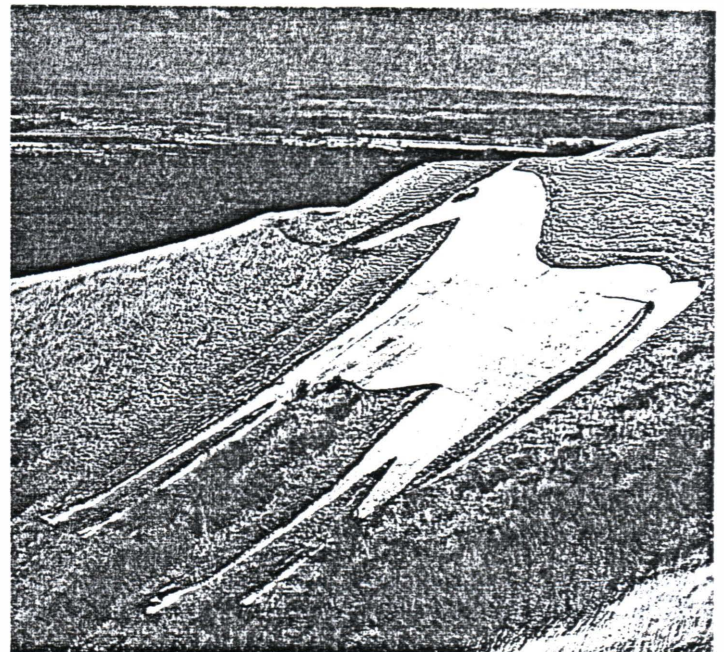
The great pictures of white horses and naked giants carved out of the chalk on downland hillsides across Southern England retain a considerable power to fascinate. Like the stone circles, hill-forts and burial mounds that are found in the same areas they appear to stand at the boundary of the natural and artificial; the work of humanity, but totally integrated with the landscape around them. They offer, in their starkness, a lack of evidence of links with any specific period, that seems to place them outside history as commonly understood.

The standard survey of these figures is Morris Marples's *White Horses and Other Hill Figures*, written in 1949. Although this book inevitable covers much the same ground, the two surveys are very different. Like Marples, Newman surveys the historical references to and theories of the origins of the older figures such as the Long Man of Wilmington and the Uffington horse, and then looks at the work of more recent imitators such as eighteenth century squires carving out their own white horses, or World War I soldiers cutting

regimental badges in the turf. However, where Marples could relegate fringe theories about the origins of the older figures to a lost eighteenth and nineteenth century world of rural clergymen and gentleman amateur archaeologists propounding ideas about Druids, today a whole new world of fringe archaeology has grown up. The chalk figures have been incorporated into the world of leys and terrestrial zodiacs. Ley hunters have produced charts to show, for example, how the

white horses of Wiltshire form huge isosceles triangles, unconcerned by the fact that this construction links genuine ancient figures with later imitations.

Mr Newman gives his readers a clear and level-headed survey of such ideas, and one suspects that he is sensitive to their appeal and would like to believe them more than his knowledge of archaeology tells him is possible. When he expresses his own judgements on the origins of the more



obsure figures his conjectures on probable origins from pre-Roman times to the middle ages seem reasonable enough, and he takes each figure on its own merits, rather than attempting to propound some overall theory to explain everything. However, when attempting to reconstruct the ancient English pagan beliefs that on horses, giants and fertility that he believes lay behind some of the figures he moves into more dubious areas, since it is not obvious that it is possible to interpolate these beliefs on the evidence of Mediaeval customs and pagan practices of the classical world and Ireland.

But whether or not these traditions are directly relevant to the building of hill figures, their use of the same symbols is an indication of just how resonant the imagery of the figures remains, a resonance which is further confirmed by this book's interesting selection of responses to the monuments from imaginative writers. *Roger Sandell*

RANDLES, Jenny. *Sixth Sense*. Robert Hale, 1987. £9.95.

Was the person who coined the phrase 'sixth sense' doing us any favours? Not according to Jenny Randles, challenging the entire notion that it is necessary to talk about a sixth sense as a matrix for psychic experiences - a super-mysterious entity remote from our other senses; "We do not need to lose the excitement which psi-events bring," she avers, "but nor do we require the invention of a sixth sense, the five that we have seem more than enough".

Taking as an initial premise that psi events are pretty common, Ms Randles looks first at those five senses. Since everything they convey to us is subject to interpretation by the brain or mind - or both if you're a strict dualist - she makes a good case for regarding supposedly 'extra-sensory' perceptions as basically normal ones; feats which only seem out of the ordinary due to our limited understanding of what our senses can achieve.

Add to this emotion as "the basis of all psi-events" (p134) and consider that these in turn are "just sensory translations of an emotional

message picked up and decoded in the mind" (p136). One result is that the message itself can take on virtually any of the forms we associate with the 'paranormal'.

Ranging freely across the gamut of phenomena, *Sixth Sense* concludes with an appeal aimed at just about everyone except perhaps the members of CSICOP: we need more imaginative experiments, a greater sense of seriousness and willingness to get involved; we have to watch out for government attempts to hijack the paranormal for aggressive purposes.

All of which is quite unexceptional and it doesn't matter too much if we've heard it before. *Magonia* readers - a demanding audience at the best of times - may feel that *Sixth Sense* is too lightweight for their literary tastes, but of course the book was not meant for them. General readers should find Ms Randle's book a lively intro into the brain/mind/psi debate. The style is relaxed, and informal; the case material (anecdotal for the most part, often autobiographical) has a genuine entertainment value, even when it relies on the belief that if someone tells us some incredible experience it's as well to swallow it and believe them.

A review isn't the place to question the author's insistence that being psychic is a fundamental part of being human, or her blanket statement "whatever their solution may be, psi events do happen". Nor is a review the place to contest her insistence that psi *must* be accepted as a reality if the race is to prosper, or that media-run nationwide experiments in telepathy may provide the breakthrough we've all been waiting for, nor that we'll go under for the lack of one.

Personally I doubt that people give a toss about psi breakthroughs; the prospect of an in-depth series of psi-testing on TV seems to me to be playing straight into the cinema-owners' hands. Out of courtesy alone you ought to give Jenny Randles' *Sixth Sense* a whirl before you disagree with her. *Michael Goss*

BAIGENT, Michael, LEIGH, Richard, and LINCOLN, Henry. *The Messianic Legacy*. Cape, 1986. £12.95.

This is the sequel to *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. I rather enjoyed that, but did not take it seriously enough to do more than skim through, and now remember little about it (Jesus was a real person who ended up in France, married into the local aristocracy, his descendant is a Euro MP, and all this got lost and rediscovered by a secret society called the Priory of Sion - something like that)

Interesting I wrote of taking it seriously as if that activity were self-evidently intelligible. But what would we have to do to be described as taking *Holy Blood*... seriously? Checking their sources of information, perhaps? But they don't provide enough information to do that. Rather than provide full-scale academic documentation they opt for shifting a lot of copies; which is fair enough, but the result is a piece of work which the academics in the various fields they wander through are hardly likely to be citing. All of which applies to this sequel, but like its predecessor it does contain interesting bits and pieces.

The book is in three, almost entirely unrelated, sections. The first is a good old rummage through recent writings on the question 'Who was Jesus?' I couldn't care less about that, but the authors are interested in supporting their claims about him made in *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. How good a job they do on this material I can't say. I haven't been inside a church for at least 20 years, and what I know about Bible study and ancient history (which is what this first section is) could be written on the back of my hand.

The second part is unadulterated piffle: pompous sub-Alvin Toffler pop sociology/psychology/anthropology, grandly (absurdly) titled 'The Search for Meaning'. Apparently, we humans are all really deeply religious at heart, and are inclined to latch on to the nearest passing religion (the authors are not fans of the Enlightenment; that's when it all began to go wrong.) I remain unconvinced that the authors

actually understand most of the material they fling around in this section, especially the Jungian concept of the archetype (but I'm one of those people whose brain starts to die when I read the name Jung).

The final section, 'The Cabal' is the most interesting. It has the advantage (for me) of dealing with events in the last 40 years, my own lifetime. Thus I am more confident that I could, if I really wanted to, try and verify some of their claims. Unfortunately this section is also badly organised and under researched; the authors are well out of their depth here - interesting that this should happen with the area closest to ordinary reality.

However, in trying to identify the 'Priory of Sion' the authors appear to have stumbled on some trails in the clandestine history of the post-war years. Starting with Jesus they end up with the knights of Malta, P2, the CIA and all the rest of the contemporary paranoid's chess pieces. Unfortunately, to pad the section out they insist we share the awful tedium of doing their basic research with them. What could have been simple footnoted assertions take pages, as we yawn through endless meetings and phone calls.

And what have they discovered? I don't know and they don't know. It looks like a complicated intelligence operation run - probably by the CIA and MI6 - in support of the basic church-state-monarchy axis of pre WW2 Europe, another piece in the jigsaw of post-WW2 anti-communism in Europe. Priory of Sion personnel crop up in the same places as CIA money. Chapetr 24, 'Secret Powers behind covert groups is a reasonable GCSE-level account of this area, destroyed by the repeated citing of David Yallop's *In God's Name* - a book which has no sources for most of its assertions and is quite useless (even if interesting).

It is possible that the authors have stumbled onto something - an ambitious psy-ops job running through the recent history of Western Europe. But if they have, then the very fact that they have been given access to some of this material suggests very strongly to me that Lincoln

and Co. have become co-opted by the operation, and their books are, willingly or unwillingly, now part of it.

Both these books present themselves as great detective hunts through the undergrowth of history. I suspect that they're merely following a trail carefully laid by a bunch of smart-aleck spooks, and towards the end of the final section there is a hint that the authors suspect this too. Will the third volume be called *How we Were Conned*?

Robin Ramsay, editor of *Lobster*, a journal of 'intelligence, parapolitics, state research', details from 17c Pearson Avenue, Hull, HU5 2SX.

FBI File on George Adamski, Research File on George Adamski. Both published by William Moore Publications, 4219 West Olive Street, Suite 247, Burbank, CA 91505, USA.

These two publications, issued in 1984 and 1985, provide much new background information on Adamski and his associates, but Adamski supporters will find little to comfort them. The FBI file may come as a surprise to some, but there are sixty pages of notes and memoranda, now declassified, which show the Bureau did indeed show considerable interest in Adamski in the 1950's for reasons that are not too clear. They visited him at least three times and even examined his famous 'scout-ship' photos. Unfortunately the names of many of the people involved have been deleted to avoid embarrassment; this is standard practice under US government exception codes. Whatever one believes about Adamski, the authorities *did* take a certain interest in him and kept a dossier on his activities. One thing that emerges is that at one point Adamski came very close to criminal charges for making misleading statements about the USAF and the FBI, and for falsifying an FBI document.

The *Research File* consists of about 100 pages of private letters, magazine extracts, reprints of articles, etc., about Adamski over a 30-year period. Some of it seems to have little direct relevance, and the quality of reproduction leaves a lot to be desired. There is little good news for Adamski supporters here, either, and the late

OPPENHEIM, Janet, *The Other World: spiritualism and psychical research in England*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, £25.00

This is an excellent detailed account of the social and intellectual background to the early years of spiritualism and psychical research in England. Oppenheim traces the various influences which impelled various people into these fields, in particular the search for an alternative to dogmatic Christianity and materialism. In large part the arguments are illustrated by intellectual biographies of numerous participants (Sidgwick, Myers, Barrett, Wallace, Crooks and Lodge)

The book is divided into three main sections. The first, 'The Selling', examines the mediums and lay members of Spiritualist societies, sources of recruitment, etc. Part Two, 'A Surrogate Faith', explores the religious dimension, concentrating in three areas - the similarities and differences between the mainly middle-class and metropolitan Christian Spiritualists and the working-class and provincial 'anti-Christian' Spiritualists; the role played by the agnosticism of Myers, Sidgwick, et al in the founding of the SPR and the Theosophical and other occult movements.

The third section, 'A Pseudoscience', explores the relationship between psychical research and psychology (including references to phrenology and mesmerism) and physics, with reference to Crooks, Barret and Lodge.

Eschewing the polemics of an Inglis or a Brandon, Ms Oppenheim charts a course of benevolent scepticism, aware of the great difficulties facing the simplistic accounts of 'believers' and 'sceptics'. She is herself clearly sceptical of the claims of most physical mediums, but concludes that many puzzles remain, and that if explanations are forthcoming will "suggest that the Victorian and Edwardian psychical researcher glimpsed at least an element of the solution", and that "fundamentally their work was neither ridiculous nor even misguided, for through it they helped to find the means of accepting the changed world around them."

With nearly 400 pages of text and nearly ninety pages of notes, this is not a light read. It is however an essential book for anyone with an interest in the history of psychical research, spiritualism, or the impact of science on religious faith in Victorian England. What a pity then it is priced out of the range not only of many individuals, but of most under-funded public libraries as well. Let us hope that the publishers bring out a more modestly priced paperback version soon.

Peter Rogerson

George Hunt Williamson also gets quite a hammering for parading his phoney degrees and awards in *American Men of Science*. When the editors discovered this they promptly deleted his entry. Williamson, witnessed Adamski's desert encounter; was a contactee himself, and later wrote some zany 'ancient astronaut'-type books.

Other interesting items are an anonymous letter claiming that both Adamski and Williamson had connections with an American Nazi leader who was convicted of sedition; an explanation of how Adamski probably obtained his 'Venusian writing' photograph, and the final insight into the notorious Straith letter affair (which even made the columns of *The Times* of all places!) It is a pity these documents were not available in time for the Good/Zinsstag book.

Christopher D. Allan

IRWIN, Harvey J. *Flight of Mind: a psychological study of out-of-body experiences*, Scarecrow Press, 1985, \$27.50

A detailed critical review of the evidence and explanatory theories for the ODBE - probably the most comprehensive treatment to date. Irwin notes the often uncritical and selective approach of researchers such as Robert Crookall. He finds little evidence to support a literalistic interpretation of the ODBE, but is also critical of previous psychological theories. He proposes his own 'imaginal model': a state of high self absorption (caused either by extremely high or low arousal, or autonomous mentation) leads to a loss of contact with bodily sensations, thus to the loss of the socially conditioned belief that the 'self' is 'in the body'. The resulting generalised sensation of disemb-

odiment is converted by synesthesia (the translation of sensations received by one sense into the imagery of another) into the ODBE 'visual perception'.

It must be left to the psychologists to pronounce on the validity of this model, though it strikes me as extending synesthesia a bit far, and perhaps artificially separates the ODBE from other metachoric experiences.

As this book is aimed at the academic psychologist it is heavy going in places, which may deter potential readers, who may prefer Sue Blackmore's more accessible treatment. However, it is well worth persevering with, and *Magonia* readers will find it well worthwhile.

Peter Rogerson

KIES, Cosette N. *The Occult in the Western World: an annotated bibliography*, Mansell, 1986, £19.95.

There have been several recent attempts at comprehensive bibliographies of the occult and paranormal in the past few years, most of which have suffered from trying to be too comprehensive, pouring everything from kiddie books on UFOs to scholarly tomes on Eastern mysticism into one indigestible and unhelpful mélange. Cosette Kies defines her range: "Certain areas are treated only in a rather cursory way. . . . These include primitive religions, classical mythology, Eastern religions, legerdemain, Pente-costalism and mystical branches of the accepted major religions. . . . Emphasis has been placed on material suitable for reference such as dictionaries, bibliographies and encyclopedias. Only a few juvenile titles are provided, and only those whose contents are substantive."

These are sensible restrictions, and as a result the book is of far more practical use than its predecessors. The editor's annotations are short and to the point, making it clear whether or not a book will be of further interest, without polemic or flannel. As with most bibliographic works nowadays the price is high, it is certainly no worse than most, and the book's practical approach and emphasis on recent material makes it worthwhile for librarians and serious readers.

John Rimmer